

27 May 1970

SUBJECT: Mitchell Livingston WerBell

1. Subject is a 52-year-old, native-born American who served on military assignment with the Office of Strategic Services from approximately July to December of 1945 with primary service in the China-Burma-India theatre. Following his military/OSS service, Subject entered into a variety of short-term business activities, most of which were characterized by his unorthodox business practices. There is no indication that he has ever been employed by the Agency.

2. There is considerable evidence in Subject's file that he was looked upon with strong suspicion by several Government agencies, including the Bureau of Customs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for alleged arms smuggling in a number of South American countries, as well as his apparent involvement with several revolutionary groups and Castro assassination schemes. Office of Security records disclose that Subject is generally categorized as a con man, unscrupulous, a wheeler-dealer and a promoter of grandiose schemes.

3. In July 1959 Subject apparently volunteered his services to the Western Hemisphere Division and was seriously considered for use as an informant on revolutionary activities in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. During the period that Subject's Operational Approval was being processed, he volunteered several pieces of information, all of which were judged to have little value. In October 1959, WH Division decided to drop all operational interest in the Subject since they became convinced that his real aim in working for CIA was to use Agency funds to promote his personal interests.

4. In February 1967 the Domestic Contact Service advised that Subject frequently volunteered information to their Miami Office and was going to be asked to respond to certain OSI requirements pertaining to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and other selected areas. However, it is not known that Subject was approached in this regard, and the DCS was provided with information relating to his dubious character.

5. In August 1967 Subject came to Agency attention when he attempted to interest a group of military officers in a weapon silencer he had supposedly developed for the M-16 rifle. One of these officers was actually a representative of TSD servicing under cover who reported that Subject had no reservations about imposing himself on anyone in order to achieve his aims.

6. Subject was mentioned extensively in an article on independent arms dealers appearing in the January 1968 issue of True magazine, and he reportedly made statements that the CIA and the DIA would protect him in case he got into difficulty. Based on Subject's statements, the Munitions Control Board asked the Agency whether we had any interest in him. The case was summarized for the benefit of the Deputy Director for Support on 11 January 1968, and the reply to the Munitions Control Board was provided by the Office of Logistics.

7. Office of Security records reflect that a Department of Defense representative reviewed Subject's security file in March 1968, at which time we continued to receive reports that Subject was representing himself as a CIA employee. In May 1969 information was received from an Air Force OSI representative in Miami, Florida, that Subject was undergoing a security clearance check as a result of his being employed by a company with a Government contract. At about the same time Saigon Station requested a Headquarters "bona fides" check on Subject, who was then employed by Sionics, Inc.; and he advised OSI that he was affiliated with CIA. The Station was informed of Subject's background as an unscrupulous con-man.

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8. On 26 May 1969 (Bangkok Station) generated a cable with extensive distribution in the Far East outlining Subject's activities

in his alleged capacity as Chief of CIA in Thailand. It was mentioned that the (Station) had been plagued for some weeks by Subject, Vice President and Director Research and Development for Sionics, Atlanta, Georgia. Subject reportedly describes himself as a counter-insurgency expert, has a variety of weapons to display and claims to be a retired Colonel. He normally implies United States Government connections and he presents a demonstration of a variety of exotic weapons that never fails to impress. Reportedly Subject had visited Vietnam in order to provide General Abrams with such a demonstration of weapons, and it was stated that he planned on setting up a sniper training program.

9. The Washington Post of 3 December 1969 contains an extensive article on Subject, who was under Federal investigation for receiving guns shipped from Vietnam through Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. The article mentions that two years previously Subject was indicted on charges of violating a Federal law forbidding the preparation of a military expedition against a friendly nation from American territory.

10. The Washington Post of 22 February 1970 contains an article which indicated that Lt. Colonel Paul A. Mariott of Eglin Air Force Base was cleared of any illegal actions in connection with the shipment of captured weapons from Vietnam. The Subject is quoted as having said that his firm, Sionics, Inc., had arranged for the shipment to the United States through Eglin Air Force Base, supposed for Air Force use in museums.

11. The Washington Evening Star of 26 February 1970 contains a story dealing with the charges that the Columbia Broadcasting System had contributed \$80,000 to a 1966 plot to invade Haiti. Subject was identified as one of the "leading figures" in the deal, and he was described as a munitions dealer linked to clandestine operations in Latin America. He reportedly was hired by CBS as a consultant for the invasion story, receiving \$1,500.00 as a down payment.

12. True magazine of April 1970 contains an article by Andrew St. George entitled, "The Mafia vs the CIA", which alleges to be the story of the struggle of two invisible governments for the control of Haiti. Subject is mentioned in the article as a "munitions merchant" who cooperated with the investigation being conducted by the magazine.

Aide at Weapons Lab

Cleared in AF Probe

WASH. POST 2-22-70

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SUBJECT

Air Force officials said yesterday that they have cleared a lieutenant colonel at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida of "any illegal or unauthorized actions" in connection with shipments to the base of weapons captured in Vietnam.

The announcement was made in a terse statement by Col. Abner B. Martin, commander of the secret armament laboratory at Eglin.

He made no mention of the reported role of an Atlanta firm, Sionics Inc., whose officials said they arranged the shipments.

The firm's vice president, Mitchell L. WerBell III, said in December that he had the guns "shipped back to this country to present to the Air Force for use in museums as a presentation from Sionics."

WerBell said he made the arrangements while working with the Air Force in evaluating Sionics' new gun-silencing equipment in South Vietnam. Air Force spokesmen in Washington, however, said the Air Force had no interest in silencers, and Defense Department officials said Sionics has never had any contract with the Air Force.

In his announcement, Col. Martin dwelt only on the involvement of Lt. Col. Paul A. Mariott, the armament laboratory's chief assistant for systems support, and this without spelling out Mariott's connection.

Col. Martin said simply that he ordered an investigation last July when the arms, including Russian-designed AK-13 submachine guns, "arrived at Eglin without apparent evidence that applicable import rules and regulations had been complied with."

After a check by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations which "centered" on Mariott, the lieutenant colonel's "activities in the incident were found clear of any illegal or unauthorized actions on his part, and no disciplinary or administrative actions have been or will be taken."

Martin said "the weapons at Eglin" would be used for "evaluation, experiment and display purposes in the armament laboratory." He made no mention of any that Sionics may have gotten. WerBell has indicated that only some of

the guns stayed at the Air Force base.

Reports of the air force investigation surfaced last November along with charges that the weapons were intended for distribution to militant right-wing groups. In his statement yesterday, Col. Martin said that "no evidence had been developed at that point (in November) to substantiate the published allegations." He did not say what the evidence developed since then suggested.

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3 Dec 1969

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Gun Shipment Figures Played Dramatic Roles

By Bruce Galphin

Washington Post Staff Writer

ATLANTA, Dec. 2—The two top officials of an Atlanta firm under investigation for receiving guns shipped from Vietnam through Eglin Air Force Base in Florida are no strangers to controversy or dramatic situations.

One was actively involved in plans to set up an anti-Castro base in Haiti, and both were in the Dominican Republic during the 1965 American intervention to put down a revolution.

Mitchell Livingston WerBell III, vice president of Sionics, an Atlanta weapons research and manufacturing firm, was indicted 2½ years ago on charges of violating a federal law forbidding preparation of a military expedition against a friendly nation from American territory.

The indictment against WerBell and six others was made after customs agents raided an island camp near Marathon, Fla., where they seized a small arsenal of weapons and found 75 battle-clad exiles and Americans.

Not on Island

WerBell himself was not on the island at the time of the raid.

Only four weeks after WerBell was accused, the U.S. attorney in Miami announced the indictment. WerBell, president of the firm, was in the Dominican Republic at the time, as

the attorney general" (Ramsey Clark). The federal attorney, William A. Meadows Jr., said he could not make any further comment on why the charge was being dropped.

WerBell commented wryly that he was unhappy because "I've lost my one claim to notoriety."

At the time of the indictment, WerBell was quoted by the Atlanta Constitution as admitting an "extremely combatant role" in the anti-Castro base plans.

The federal indictment had alleged a conspiracy to ship guns and munitions from Atlanta and New York to Miami.

But WerBell told a reporter at the time of the indictment that he had withdrawn his support from the Haitian base plan when it appeared to be headed toward direct military action.

"If I'm called upon again to fight Communists in the western hemisphere, I'll do it," he said. "Anything I've done has served the best interest of the United States."

"I've been involved in anti-communist activities a long time," he said. "I've helped the Dominican government fight the Communists."

Aided Newsman

In the Dominican action two years before, WerBell was credited with pulling a wounded American newsman out of a bullet-riddled car in Santo Domingo. The newsman, Miami Herald photographer Doug Kennedy, had been accidentally wounded by U.S. Marine gunfire.

WerBell, president of the firm, was in the Dominican Republic at the time, as

an official for an American development corporation.

At one point during the fighting, he said a few days afterward, he and some 200 other Americans were "lined up against a wall" by armed revolutionaries at a Santo Domingo hotel.

He said the rebels were looking for Cuban nationalists, and that he managed to slip inside the hotel, where American embassy officials negotiated safe conduct. He was evacuated by helicopter to a U.S. warship.

"The Communist movement has actually defeated itself" by forcing the United States "to adopt such a firm policy," he commented at the time.

Both the Dominican fighting and the Marathon raid occurred before WerBell and Brown founded Sionics.

An Air Force officer at Eglin is under investigation for his role in three shipments of small arms from Vietnam. WerBell denied reports that the weapons were intended for right-wing anti-Negro groups and said he himself, while in Vietnam, had had the captured weapons sent to Atlanta via Eglin for laboratory research.